

## TRACY R. KAY APPOINTED EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE WESTCHESTER CHILDREN'S MUSEUM

Rye, NY, October 20, 2008--The Westchester Children's Museum today announced the appointment of Tracy R. Kay as the Museum's Executive Director. Until recently, Mr. Kay was the Deputy Commissioner of Nassau County Department of Parks, Recreation & Museums. His hire represents the successful conclusion of a year-long national search from among a broad range of museum, education, and non-profit professionals particularly with experience in start-up institutions, and moves the Museum closer towards its stated goal of opening its doors to the public in late 2010. Mr. Kay will officially assume the position in November 2008.



"The position of Executive Director of a new cultural institution, particularly in the current economy, requires a person of entrepreneurial spirit with a deep understanding of the value a children's museum brings to a community – its youth, its families, and its schools. I am confident that Tracy is the visionary Executive Director we have long sought," states Corinne L. Zola, President of the Westchester Children's Museum. "Thanks to our many donors we have a strong foundation of supporters and friends to build upon; we have a spectacular site and a vibrant education plan; and with the hiring of our new Executive Director, we now have all the ingredients in place to create one of the finest Children's Museums in the country."

Tracy Kay, newly appointed executive director of the Westchester Children's Museum, in front of the Playland Bathhouses in Rye, site of the future Museum.

Mr. Kay brings a deep history and knowledge of the region having previously spent 20 years as Executive Director of the Rye Nature Center, a municipally-owned and operated natural science and environmental education center in Rye, New York. He joined Rye Nature Center in 1977 after receiving a Masters Degree from Yale. At the Nature Center, he worked closely with government agencies, boards and commissions at federal, state, county and local levels and fostered the growth of the Friends of Rye Nature Center organization to raise private funds for the Center's operations. Mr. Kay also developed model family, preschool, school vacation, and after-school programs, and assisted Rye City School District in developing a K-6 science curriculum incorporating experiential learning opportunities at the Center.

In his current position, Mr. Kay directs the operations of Nassau County's museum system and coordinates partnerships with private institutions in the County, among them the Long Island Children's Museum. Prior to his work on Long Island, from 1997 to 2005 he led the Schuylkill Center for Environmental Education in Philadelphia through a major leadership transition and spearheaded the development of a master plan focused on site restoration and the enhancement of the visitor

experience within the 400-acre preserve. He formed partnerships with community and regional organizations and established the center as a model facility for community engagement and high quality education programming, including the creation of an on-site charter school. Over his thirty years in the field, Mr. Kay has built a strong national network of professional colleagues through his work with the American Association of Museums, the Institute of Museum and Library Services and the Association of Nature Center administrators. He has a broad overview of best practices in the operation and management of cultural and educational institutions and frontline experience in fundraising, capital campaigns, feasibility studies, strategic planning, team building, facilities management, membership development and marketing. Mr. Kay received his MFS, from Yale University, School of Forestry and Environmental Studies, in 1977 and his BS, Biology, Magna cum Laude, from St. Lawrence University, in 1975.

### **Westchester Children's Museum Campaign Status**

The Museum is in the midst of a campaign to raise the funds to build the museum exhibits and operations in its intended site at the historic landmark Bathhouses at Rye Playland. This spring, the Westchester County Board of Legislature voted to spend \$8.8 million to renovate the historic landmark Bathhouses at Rye Playland, opening the door to a unique public/private partnership. Most recently, the Museum received a pledge of \$1.3 million from the Yonkers based Thomas and Agnes Carvel Foundation. The gift marked a milestone in the campaign in both the unprecedented amount, and in bringing the funds raised past the halfway mark in its Phase I Campaign goal of \$7.5 million by the time the County has completed its renovations on the Playland Bathhouses in mid-2009. At that time, the Museum will be prepared to take over the Bathhouses and build out the interior. With the Carvel Foundation gift, the Museum has raised \$4 million in capital gifts and pledges towards that goal. To complete the project, the Phase II goal is \$7 million to open and begin operating the Museum at the end of 2010. The Museum is seeking support from individuals, foundations, corporations and local business, as well as government and public sources.

### **About the Westchester Children's Museum**

With guidance from teachers, education administrators, cultural and community leaders, and parents, the exhibitions and programs of the Museum will draw from the dramatic history, cultural diversity, flourishing environments and ecosystems, and the rich literary and artistic traditions of Westchester and surrounding counties, including The Bronx, Fairfield, Rockland, and Putnam. The educational content will be based on elementary school curriculum through fifth grade and the best practices in early childhood development studies. Programming will be for children ages 0-10, but learning obviously does not stop there. Opportunities for children to continue to grow personally, and professionally, will be developed through apprenticeships for middle and high school age students. At this time, the Westchester Children's Museum operates as a "museum without walls." Until the walls are built, the Museum offers as much programming as possible through the help of volunteers and collaborating organizations.

The Westchester Children's Museum is a 501(c)3 non profit organization. All donations are tax deductible to the fullest extent of the law.

###

For further information, the public can call 914-421-5050 or visit [www.discoverWCM.org](http://www.discoverWCM.org)